2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
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control on quality and could bring together sufficient produce to make a transaction with an exporter worthwhile. As more and more Badagas became interested in growing cash crops, middlemen appeared not only to buy up small quantities of tea, coffee and potato but also to sell seed, fertilizer and even some insurance.

After Independence profiteering by the middlemen was largely checked by the Nilgiri Cooperative Marketing Society set up with state government aid (Vivekanandam Pillai, 1937, 249). Today there are nearly two hundred cooperative societies in the Nilgiris which pool the resources of members and also supply cheap fertilizer. Many such societies own local tea-processing factories and warehouses and are dominated by Badagas. After 1957 heavy loss through potato disease caused a widespread shift to tea or coffee growing,[22] and in the 1970s large acreages have been devoted to growing a sturdy new German variety of cabbage which finds markets nation-wide. Both tea and cabbage are quite successful crops. The availability of help from the Central Cooperative Bank made these unexpected switches in crops possible, for otherwise the initial capital outlay and the small size of most estates would have rendered the new venture unfeasible. Several cottage industries have also helped diversify the rural economy over the past thirty years; in particular beekeeping, liquor distilling, milk sales, knitting and embroidery have provided new, regular sources of income for many hundreds of Badaga families.

The early twentieth century saw the rise not only of wealthy Badaga land-owners but also of large-scale labour contractors. A few men profitted by getting the contracts for gangs to dig pits for planting tea-cuttings, pick coffee-beans, build roads or construct public buildings in the district.[23] Less wealthy Badagas set themselves up as small shopkeepers, tailors or money-lenders or found work in a wide variety of urban trades.[24] Whenever possible the more resourceful reinvested their profits in land (Ranga, 1934, 10), either tea and coffee estates or farm plots formerly belonging to Kotas (Mandelbaum, 1955, 240). The other reinvestment commonly made was in college education for their sons. With the economy fully monetized the stress was now on providing stability for the coming generations.

MODERN EMPLOYMENT

Prior to World War I virtually all Badagas were cultivators, and

21 Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
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During the latter part of the last century there was a transitional phase when neither the size of the gentry family nor its wealth determined its status: its influence derived mainly from its reputation or strength of character, we are told. In this century all Badaga families, whether gentry or not, have a prestige commensurate with their wealth: the unusually affluent family now receives the respect and wields the power of a gentry family even though it is not one.

Generally all the headmen and their key assistants belong to the gentry; and during the nineteenth century the British appointed *manegars* and *karnams* from among the gentry, too.[17] In the twentieth century, as we have seen, literacy was considered more important than birth in these appointments. In fact this century has witnessed a shift away from ascribed status towards achieved status. It is now becoming less relevant whether a man was born to the gentry or is a Ha:ruva or Torea than whether he has acquired college education and a good job. However, even though there are now signs of socio-economic classes emerging, rural Badagas do not yet discuss their social life in terms of such distinctions as landed/landless, wealthy/poor or educated/uneducated. Individuals are known to vary in these qualities but so far the variation is a matter of degree and has not been schematized in Badaga thinking into a series of neat dyadic contrasts.

In the operation of their social system today the Badagas recognize a dozen major criteria for social differentiation,[18] which they do conceive as the following dyadic contrasts:

(1) Man/woman
(2) Adult/child
(3) Nilgiri/non-Nilgiri
(4) Badaga/non-Badaga
(5) Gentry/non-gentry
(6) Lingayat/non-Lingayat
(7) Vegetarian/meat-eater
(8) Our phratry/other phratries
(9) Agnates/affines (or our clan/other clans)
(10) Our village/other villages
(11) Factional divisions
(12) Hindu/Christian.

This classification is one of cross-cutting categories: each person can place himself and everyone he normally interacts with on one side or the other of each category. These are at different levels of

565 that it has a high status by all of the accepted criteria -- priority of settlement, wisdom, wealth, piety, and absolute size. The distinction between gentry and non-gentry is sufficiently precise that all Badaga families can be allotted to the one category or the other by everyone who knows them. I estimate that during the present century roughly five percent of the community is considered as gentry. The great bulk of the community is non-gentry because its ancestors were not known to be the first settlers in any particular hamlet, or because they were only younger sons in the gentry families.

Until the middle of the 19th Century, the most prestigious gentry family 565 595 was the largest family possible. To achieve this ideal men would often have polygynous marriages; in one case (probably a record number for all Badagas) a man had (175) five wives simultaneously, during the early years of this century. In such families it is -- or was -- common for some of the wives to be several decades younger than the husband, in which case they might present him with sons of which he was (178) probably aware that he was not the biological father. Today polygyny is no longer common; nevertheless I know of a gentry family where the husband is now 86 years old, and the youngest of his three wives is 19.

There was, during the latter part of the last century, a transitional phase 178 565 in the condition of the gentry, when neither the size of the family nor its wealth was the important determinant of its status; its influence derived primarily from its "strength of character", I was told. This change seems to mark the beginning of a break-away from traditional values which, as we shall see, gained pace in the 565 years following 1913. In the present century all Badaga families, whether consi- 556 dered gentry or not, gain a prestige commensurate with their wealth. If a family

family even though it is not one: this represents a change from the 19th Century situation. Unlike the members of other phratries, however, a wealthy Toreya will only receive the respect due to a member of the gentry from the other members of his own phratry. To anyone else he is primarily a Toreya rather than a prestigeful man.

In the arrangement of marriages, although it is obligatory (as we have seen) to take brides from other sibs and is sometimes acceptable to take them from other phratries, it is not common or desirable to take brides from across the division between gentry and non-gentry. A Kaggusi man, for example, may take a Gauda bride, thereby crossing the limits of his phratry and of the vegetarian community; yet if he is of the gentry his bride should be so too.

The gentry are the only Badaga families who have any compunctions about the remarriage of widowers. No young woman of a gentry family would marry a man who had performed the crucial rice-sprinkling ceremony at the funeral of his previous wife. This is therefore an exception to the usual Badaga practice of allowing remarriage freely to both widowers and widows. If a widower of the gentry has done this ceremony he can only marry a <u>widow</u> of the gentry. With this in mind, if a widower wants another young wife as soon as his previous wife has died, his <u>brother</u> does the rice-sprinkling ceremony at her funeral instead (provided the parents of the brother's wife agree to it). This is supposed to be a public affirmation that it was really her husband's brother who had supported the dead woman; although everybody knows that this is a mere fiction. The parents of his wife must agree to the performance because they might not want their daughter married to a fictional widower, particularly if he too is treated as "gentry"; but they usually agree willingly because it is to the advantage of all concerned

463 554 [515] all pubic hair (though Badaga women do it for themselves) because it is thought unesthetic and is found to harbor lice and ticks. The disgrace attached to this occupation is well displayed in one of the great expressions of Badaga disdain: "What can you do? -- You can't even shave my cock!" Badagas who are forced to take up barbering because of poverty never make a full-time occupation of it, especially as professional barbers are now generally available from other communities. So far as scavenging is concerned, there is no need at all to remove night soil from the houses, because Badagas always defecate either in the fields and bushes, or in a special manure pit. The feces of small children are not considered polluting and are easily removed from the house by anyone. All other cleaning and sweeping around the house is done by the womenfolk living there.

514 (783) 462

178 565 Those Badagas who are neither gentry nor in the poverty-stricken category show some signs of having achieved upward mobility over the past century or so. There was traditionally a class of gentry, as we know, that was distinguished by higher prestige and higher behavioral expectations. On the other hand there was in all likelihood no class of poverty-stricken Badagas obliged to become barbers or launderers until land pressure and the settlement of boundaries in the 1880's had made it difficult for the disinherited and landless to find new farming land. Only in the 80 or 90 years since that period has this landless class emerged at the bottom of the status hierarchy. And as it emerged, the prestige of the gentry was continuously on the wane. Both changes were related, as we shall see, to increasing Badaga involvement in the Indian cash economy. The middle class of peasant families seems slowly to have decreased the gap in conduct and prestige that separated them from the gentry families; until now the cash income of a family is the clearest mark of its influence in the community. The aristocratic values of

(556)

5: Hockings E-5 (1962-1963) 1989
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NB the gentry are now of little relevance; and the gentry with most prestige today are
S65 those who have adapted best to the opportunities of the cash economy.
S56

454 tions.

The period between the two World Wars saw the rise not only of wealthy 178 Badaga land-owners, but also of labor contractors. A few men profited by getting (556) contracts to build roads or construct public buildings in the District. Two patterns (454) of reinvestment were common among such men: one was in land (Ranga 1934: 10), even in tea and coffee estates; the other was in college education for their sons. Less wealthy Badagas during the same period set themselves up as small shop-keepers or money-lenders, or hired themselves out as builders, carpenters, water-carriers and even coolies (Francis 1908: 129; Ranga 1934: 8).

For many Badagas with small land-holdings, this period of transition was 426 marked by the frustrations of indebtedness. Pieces of land were sometimes sold (178) to non-Badagas in order to pay off outstanding debts; but in general Badaga debtors tried to honor their obligations, and worked hard either to produce profitable cash crops or to buy back their former lands (Thurston 1909: I, 64; Ranga 1934: 4; Vivekanandam Pillai 1937: 249).

We may say that the take-off for economic growth within the cash economy 178 was complete by 1930, when most of the Badagas had permanently severed their 648 traditional exchange-relationship with the Kotas. This, from the Badaga point of (439) view, was an advantageous move, for it allowed them to buy pottery, ropes and metal goods in the bazaar at a lower price than the Kotas were getting. This is not to say that Kotas had been receiving cash; but the traditional dole of grain they were given at each harvest was becoming increasingly costly to the Badagas because of rising grain prices. We shall discuss this point further when we come to consider recent factions (see Chapters VII and VIII).

178 While tea and coffee yield the highest profit per acre, they require

S82 days the most affluent and prestigeful families were the gentry, and gentry boys
S83 normally married only the daughters of the gentry. Today a wealthy Badaga, whe-
(178) ther of the gentry or not, will often be willing to pay a dowry in order to marry his daughter into another wealthy family.

178 The wealthiest of Badaga families today are not necessarily members of
S54 the gentry at all, although formerly this was always true. It is the wealthy par-
S65 venus who have recently supplanted the traditional gentry in the ability to wield maximum influence and political power. How have such families become wealthy?
S56 As we have seen (Chapter VI), some have been able to plant large areas with tea or coffee, and these estates have brought in tremendous profits; others have become contractors for various building projects -- the Nilgiri railway and the army barracks being major cases of this. Others again are middlemen, distributing fertilizers or dealing in potato crops. Yet others have been making money from the large-scale distribution of illicitly made liquor, ever since prohibition was ins-
454 tituted directly after Independence. Regardless of the way in which the money was acquired in the first place, it is wherever possible invested in tea or coffee plan-
(S54) tations, or perhaps in privately owned bus-lines. Such new-found capital is sometimes invested in Badaga businesses in Ootacamund or Coonoor, as well. Another type of investment is in the support of sons studying at universities; and this can
S54 bring high prestige to a family in a short period of time. Men who can obtain deg-
871 rees in medicine or law are assured a high social position in the Nilgiris, but
(S56) those who manage to get only a B.A. or a B.Sc., whether by bribery or by hard work, find that it brings some prestige but rarely any additional income. Upwardly mobile families now wish their sons to take at least a bachelor's degree, but

584 fathers of those girls can feel more secure about arranging a marriage with a
(583) family already linked to the hamlet through previous marriages. A reciprocal exchange of women between two sibs -- and specifically between these two hamlets -- thus becomes a more tangible and acceptable pattern of behavior.

583 The intrusion of a demand for dowry into this situation can be an unpleasant change: two families, lineages or hamlets which have exchanged several daughters in marriage have established an alliance which proclaims their social equality. If one side seeks dowry it may rupture the stability they have achieved over a period of several generations; for dowry is taken to imply a kind of social inequality between the two parties. Paying dowry for a progressive, educated groom is like purchasing security for one's daughter.

(178) The reciprocal nature of alliances and the traditions of Badaga marriage are still being adhered to as far as possible. For this reason, if no other, the payment of dowry is supposed to be a "secret", and the recipient of it is still obliged to pay the Rs. 200 honnu. Among those who are wealthy enough to demand
●556 or pay a dowry, however, fulfilment of their traditional roles in Badaga society
156 can become a problem-laden, even anachronistic, burden. Some of these men now command annual incomes a hundred or more times greater than the average
(550) income of other men in their home village. As a consequence of this newly risen inequality the wealthy are constantly being plagued by importunate villagers and distant relatives, as well as Toda and Kota friends, who try to activate the traditional bonds of friendship or kinship in order to maximize their share in the power
(166) and influence of the nouveaux riches. It is therefore not surprising to find that the wealthiest Badagas have been the first to leave their natal village and build themselves comfortable houses in the towns or in the middle of their tea estates.

177 As the wealth of such families increases, and as the possibility of their upward
•556 mobility, as modern Indian families rather than as Badaga villagers, becomes a
829 reality, their attitudes toward Nilgiri society and its marriage regulations change. No longer are the requirements of the traditional culture so demanding or so relevant; for these people are now oriented towards a larger South Indian society, a society whose aims and ideals are stated -- albeit in exaggerated form -- in the morality and cultural equipment of modern romantic Indian films.

Religious Change since 1913

178 Four kinds of religious change have affected various sections of the Badaga community during the present century. These changes are not directly related to each other, and need to be considered separately:

1) Bhajan and Kriśna worship have become popular;

2) The Lingayats have developed their previously tenuous ties with Lingayats in Mysore State;

3) A few distinctively Tamilian and Kanarese festivals and rituals have been adopted;

4) A Roman Catholic community has appeared among the Badaga Christians.

These developments will each be discussed in turn.

796 1) Bhajan and Kriśna worship are new to the Badagas: Kriśna is
[796] a Vaiśnavite deity, the Badagas are Śaivites. The performance of bhajan (group
(795) hymns) began among Badagas some 20 or 25 years ago; so popular has it now become, nevertheless, that nearly every hamlet has one or more sets of bhajan instruments, and there is a regular -- often a weekly -- performance of the sacred
533 songs. Bhajan songs are devotional hymns, generally in praise of the lord Kriśna;

(amongst others) either his FZD or his MBD, but there is a marked preference for a FZD and some good reasons for it.[3] One involves a feeling of status congruence. Men, it is believed, demean themselves somewhat by becoming bride-givers. This is acknowledged nowadays by the payment of dowry, a new custom among the Badagas. But a young man's spiritual guide is not the family priest in this community; instead it is always his MB, whom he calls *guru* and also accords much respect. It is thus incongruent if that particular man should give his daughter in marriage to the very boy he has counselled. Marriage with a FZD, or with the daughter of a MB other than one's *guru*, gets around this emotional problem.

Patrilocality is another preference that is usually spoken of as an unbending rule. Yet there is in point of fact a term, *aliya se:tu*, for the live-in son-in-law, a young man who opts to live with his wife's family after their marriage. This is considered an undignified and pitiful thing to do, but it can bring real material advantages to a man whose wife has no brothers, and is a necessary alternative to virilocal residence in such a family. The epic ballad *Ba:la Sevana* deals with a man who moves into his father-in-law's village to help with the buffaloes, leaving his own mother in her village lamenting the loss of her only son, and bemoaning her fate since "there will be nobody to set fire to her corpse." It is interesting to note that Ba:la Sevana married into the Kunda region, one that used to be so economically distressed that its children were often sold into bondage for a period of years, thereby becoming the household servants of Badagas in other parts of the Nilgiris. The live-in son-in-law was one institution that helped make up for the loss of male children in those bad years, when bondage was the only answer to the threat of starvation in that region.

2. Patriliny and Patrilocality

Today the Badagas are successful cash-crop farmers specialising in cabbages, potatoes, and tea; those of the Kunda region are the wealthiest in the District. Until the early part of this century, on the other hand, they were all mainly farmers of millet. This and several other grains, together with dairy produce, provided their subsistence. When one delves further back in their history, to the 17th and 18th centuries when they were already well established on the Nilgiri Hills but with a population of under 2,000, one finds that the Badagas were already millet farmers yet thought of themselves as primarily buffalo herdsmen. This is reflected very clearly in a number of their epic ballads dating from that time. Since each family or lineage used once to have its own herd of buffaloes, then it is legitimate for us to consider

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[3] Letters placed in single apostrophes, 'A', 'B', 'C', etc.; stand for hypothetical people and are like personal names. Letters placed in double quotation marks, e.g. "M," "F," etc., indicate classificatory rather than actual kin relationships, and should be read as "in the category of mothers," and so on. Z = sister, S = son, etc.

9: Natesa Sastri U-5 (no date) 1892
AW50 Badaga AW50

dynasty of Madura. To these Nâyakkas or Vadugas the Badagas were allied, and they were thus originally the Śûdras of the Maisûr country. They were, however, completely Âryanised before they commenced their march three centuries ago to the district where they now live, and it is therefore not surprising that they should have brought with them many of the ancient Âryan institutions.

Chief among these may be noted the system of local self-government that even yet exists among them though in an impaired form. From the traces that are still left it is evident that the village community system prevailed among them in a complete state in the old days of their settlement on the Nîlagiris.

Each village has a head man called the Monegar. He is generally the richest man in the village, and is regarded as the highest authority upon all subjects. Before the year 1820, while the Nîlagiri district had not yet been made a separate district but only formed a single tâluk in the Coimbatore district, the power of these Monegars was much greater than it is now. At that time communication was difficult and much of the Nîlagiris had not yet been opened up, and in the different villages the Monegar was the paramount power. Stories are current even to the present day of a Monegar of one village who ordered an individual who had disobeyed his orders to be covered with a slab of stone. Unless the disobedience was of a most flagrant nature and really amounted to a determined disregard of constituted authority, such a high-handed exercise of autocratic power must have been resented by the people, for the Monegar was not an irresponsible autocrat, but a ruler holding his power by the goodwill of the whole community. The British Government has made these Monegars officials in connection with the revenue administration of the villages, but apart from this they still have certain important duties to perform in connection with the social life of the Badaga community. In all religious and social questions the Badagas go to the village Monegar. If the question is a simple one he settles it himself, if it is intricate he calls a village council to which the elders of the village are summoned. After taking their opinion he passes an order which must be obeyed, for his word is law.

Questions of partition, of cultivation and of outcasting, disputes and other minor matters, are thus settled by the village council with the Monegar as its head. It is, however, in questions arising in connexion with marriage that the Monegar and his council play their most important part. When a girl in one village is going to

9: Natesa Sastri U-5 (no date) 1892
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538 to be a near relation among the Baḍagas. Thus closes the third
(764) day of the funeral rites of the Baḍagas.

The third day's ceremony is a curious and significant ceremony.
764 The lighting up of the fire inside the house and the handful of straw
brought from the outside thatch to kindle it are nothing but the
(783) simple ways of purifying a polluted house which the high-caste
Hindus employ on various occasions. The wife mourning outside,
while the grain is being turned up in the *Kerachi*, shows her grief
at the idea that her lord had become a spirit among the departed
spirits and that all his connection with this world has entirely
(783) ceased. The passing of the pots over the fire are means adopted
to purify the vessels and the house after the pollution caused by
the death. During the first two days of mourning the milk-
house may not be entered, but on the third day it may be once
more used. There the first rice is spread in order that it may
acquire some of the purity of the spot and it is there that the feast
of friends and relatives is held that is considered to be the most
binding tie and the greatest token of friendship and caste union.

In the case of those who cremate the dead body the ceremony
of the first day is almost the same as with those who bury,
though there are certain differences. Up to the end of the con-
fession the ceremonies are all the same. The car is taken to the
cremation ground where a big fire has been lit and kept ready. At
some little distance from the fire a spot is chosen for cremating the
body, and at the place chosen a pit is dug. The pit is then filled
up with firewood and the body to be cremated is placed over it. It
is covered up with fuel.

When the corpse is placed on the funeral car it is sometimes
(768) placed with the cot also and sometimes without it. When it is
taken to the funeral pile, it is taken also with the cot and some-
(556) times without it; when the former is done the cot also is cremated.
Only well-to-do Baḍagas cremate the cot along with the dead body;
in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases the cot is not cremated.
If it is the body of a female the brother or brothers or some one of
her blood relations tear up into three parts lengthwise a new
cloth six cubits long and tie the pieces round the body in the region
(121) of the heart before placing it on the pile.* It is difficult to get
the meaning of this custom from the Baḍagas, but we may guess

* This is termed *Lâbattuvadu*, meaning tying up tight.